

WAITING FOR THE MAILMAN

All morning I've waited
like a sick lover for the world
to stick its nose in my metal slot.

Mailman, you may drive a machine
that resembles an army surplus toy
but you're just as heroic

as the first pony express rider.
You suffer exhaust fumes, dogs, wind
which blows Mace back in your face,

modern complexes where the names change
with the weather to reach me
across this populated abyss. And I wait

for you. At the first jangle
of keys along the walkway, the ivy
climbs forgotten seams of mortar, birds

screech like freed felons. Adrenalin
traces a network of forgotten friends
and lovers from my eyes to my toes.

Perhaps the hatcheck girl from Singapore,
the one with the strawberry lips and skin
of cocoa butter will write confessing

her dormant passion for me.
A publisher will exclaim, "Joyce,
you're a cross between Beckett, Thurber,

and Martin Buber. The office girls
are in stitches. Send your personal
letters. We're nominating you for"

At the first click of key that tips
the metal chutes, I charge
like a dainty bull out the door

down two flights to receive
unexpected but due acclaim.
The mailman gives me a deft smile.

He has the last joke on a world
that pays him no heed. His one
thin offering grants me passion's

promise at a discount rate. "Bring this
card to Esmerelda's Massage Parlor.
Meet the girls, Vicki, Nikki, Jackie, and Jane."